

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 SAM-01

SAB-01 ACDA-05 OC-05 CCO-00 SCCT-01 OPR-02 A-01 SY-05

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 EB-07 /103 W

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O P 021438Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8455

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

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CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1065

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT,LE
SUBJECT: LAST-MINUTE POLITICAL BARGAINING DOMINATES SCENE

REF: BEIRUT 1026 (1230Z)

SUMMARY: THE SECURITY PICTURE CONTINUES TO IMPROVE AS MARONITE AND OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS INDULGE IN SOME FRANTIC TUGGING AND HAULING ABOUT THE EMERGING POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. THIS BARGAINING COULD CONCEIVABLY UPSET THE APPLE CART. HOWEVER, THE ACCORD SEEMS FIRM ENOUGH, IN BROAD OUTLINE AT LEAST, TO WITHSTAND THE BUFFETING NOW BEING WITNESSED. CABINET IS MEETING TODAY. END SUMMARY.

1. ONLY LOCALIZED DISTURBANCES OCCURRED OVER THE WEEKEND, NONE MARRING THE NORMALIZATION TREND. THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT WAS AN ATTACK ON THE BEIRUT OFFICES OF THE LEFTIST AND PRO-IRAQI DAILIES "AL-MUHARRIR" AND "BEIRUT" LATE JAN 31. WHILE ACCOUNTS DIFFER ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THIS EVEN WAS CLEARLY A SQUABBLE WITHIN LEFTIST/PALESTINIAN RANKS (ALSO INVOLVING THE SYRIANS DIRECTLY), AND IT DID NOT RAISE TENSIONS CONCERNING THE CEASEFIRE. SEPTEL FOLLOWS WITH DETAILS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THIS INCIDENT.

2. HIGHER MILITARY COMMITTEE, WHICH JOINS LEBANESE, SYRIAN, AND PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES AT HIGH LEVEL TO SUPERVISE CEASEFIRE, HAS TAKEN STEPS TO PREVENT APPEARANCE OF ARMED MEN IN MKALLES INDUSTRIAL AREA
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AND TO OPEN PORT. ACTIVITY DID IN FACT RESUME IN PORT AREA MORNING FEB 2. SCHOOLS ALSO OPENED SAME DAY. HIGHER COMMITTEE IS NOW TURNING ATTENTION TO LIFTING OF REMAINING BARRICADES, CURRENT FOCUS BEING HARD-CORE TROUBLE SPOTS OF CHIYAH AND AIN EL-RUMMANEH. IN ANOTHER MOVE, HIGHER COMMITTEE ISSUED DECISIONS FEB 1 ON THE EVER-EXPLOSIVE ISSUE OF KIDNAPPING, AS FOLLOWS:
(A) FACTIONAL COMMANDS WILL BE ASKED TO ISSUE DEFINITE

ORDERS TO THEIR CADRES TO REFRAIN FROM KIDNAPPING AND COUNTER-KIDNAPPING, SO THAT DESIGNATED COMMITTEES CAN HANDLE CASES SEPARATELY WITHOUT BARGAINING. (B) ALL PARTIES WILL BE ASKED TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO TURN KIDNAP VICTIMS OVER TO AUTHORITIES. (C) HIGHER COMMITTEE WILL PUBLICLY NAME THOSE WHO KIDNAP OR COUNTER-KIDNAP.

3. MARONITE LEADERS HELD POLITICAL SPOTLIGHT OVER WEEK-END WITH TWO MEETINGS AT KASLIK JAN 31 AND FEB 1. FORMER SESSION RESULTED IN FORMATION OF NEW POLITICAL COMBINATION CALLED "FRONT OF FREEDOM AND MAN" AND IN COMMUNIQUE STRESSING NEED FOR RETURN TO LEBANESE CONTROL OVER ITS TERRITORY. THOUGH VAGUE IN CONTENT, THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS SIGNED A MORE HARD-LINE STAND THAN OBSERVERS HAD HOPED FOR. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SYRIAN MEDIATOR KHADDAM EXPRESSED HIS UNHAPPINESS OVER THIS OUTCOME, WITH RESULT THAT INDEFATIGABLE GO-BETWEEN BOUTROS AL-KHOURY ARRANGED THE SECOND KASLIK MEETING, AT WHICH LUCIEN DAHDAH CONFERRED WITH THE MARONITE LEADERS WHO HAD MET THE DAY BEFORE. AS PRES FRANGIE'S MAIN EMISSARY TO THE SYRIANS OVER PAST WEEKS, DAHDAH WAS IN POSITION TO EXPLAIN THE PROJECTED POLITICAL FORMULA. AFTER THE MEETING A STATEMENT WAS ISSUED SUPPORTING THE SYRIAN MEDIATION EFFORT. UNFORTUNATELY, WE ARE TOLD BY A PARTICIPANT THAT THIS STATEMENT PAPERED OVER CONSIDERABLE HARTBURN BY THE MARONITE LEADERS CONCERNING DAHDAH'S EXPLANATION TO THEM. THEY REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED OUTRAGE ESPECIALLY AT THE TERMS OF THE DRAFT COMMUNIQUE FOR THE UPCOMING LEBANESE-SYRIAN SUMMIT. THEY ARE DUE TO HAVE A FURTHER SESSION WITH DAHDAH TODAY, FEB 2. (COMMENT: THIS RETURN TO AN UNCOMPROMISING STAND BY THE MARONITES COULD OF COURSE SCOTCH THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED SO FAR, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT A PRESENT WE ARE INCLINED TO INTERPRET IT AS CHRISTIAN HUFFING AND PUFFING. THE MARONITE LEADERS BRIEFED BY DAHDAH CANNOT POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN UNAWARE OF EMERGING TERMS OF SETTLEMENT, AND THEREFORE THEIR OUTRAGE RINGS A BIT HOLLOW. POSSIBLY THEY WERE REACTING TO JAN 30 MEETING OF MOSLEM LEADERS WHICH HAD RAISED QUESTION OF HOW MARONITE PRESIDENCY WOULD BE INCORPORATED IN SETTLEMENT. THE TWO SIDES ARE INDULGING IN SOME LAST-MINUTE JOCKEYING, A DANGEROUS GAME AT THIS DELICATE STAGE BUT NOT NECESSARILY FATAL TO THE ACCORD.)

4. JUMBLATT IS ALSO STILL PUTTING HIS OAR INTO THE NEGOTIATING WATERS WITH A RENEWED DEMAND OVER THE WEEKEND FOR PROPORTIONED REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT AND OTHER

PET REFORMS. THE PRESS TODAY CITES HIM AS SAYING THAT THE LEFTIST "NATIONAL MOVEMENT" WILL REJECT THE CONCEPT OF A MARONITE PRESIDENCY AND A SPECIAL 55 PERCENT MAJORITY IN VOTING FOR PRESIDENT UNLESS THE OTHER SIDE AGREES TO THESE PROJECTS. (COMMENT: REPORTS DIFFER ON EXACTLY WHAT JUMBLATT SAID, ANOTHER VERSION BEING THAT HE REJECTED CONFENSIONALISM IN THE PRESIDENCY ABSOLUTELY BUT ACCEPTED THE 55 PERCENT MAJORITY CONCEPT. IN ANY EVENT, WE DO NOT YET CONSIDER SUCH LAST-MINUTE TUGGING AND HAULING AS DESTRUCTIVE OF THE ACCORD WHICH, IN MAIN OUTLINE AT LEAST, SEEMS GENERALLY ACCEPTED.)

5. A FURTHER EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF BARGAINING UNDERWAY AT THIS LATE STAGE WAS GIVEN BY YET ANOTHER MEETING OF MOSLEM LEADERS AT ARAMOUN JAN 31. THE MAIN TOPIC AT THIS GET-TOGETHER SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE DIVISION OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS BETWEEN SUNNIS AND SHIITES NOW THAT MOSLEMS AS A WHOLE APPEAR TO HAVE WON EQUAL REPRESENTATION WITH CHRISTIANS. THE SHIITES REPORTEDLY WANT TO BE ASSURED OF EQUALITY WITH THE SUNNIS, BUT NO AGREEMENT WAS REACHED.

6. CABINET MEETS IN SPECIAL SESSION TODAY TO REVIEW DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE SYRIAN MEDIATION. THE TIMING OF FRANGIE'S LONG-AWAITED VISIT TO DAMASCUS MAY BE ANNOUNCED. THE PRESS TODAY IS BETTING THAT THE VISIT WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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TAKE PLACE TOMORROW, FEB 3, CONFIRMING EARLIER SPECULATION THAT THIS WOULD BE THE DATE. THERE IS SPECULATION ALSO THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BROAD OUTLINES OF THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT MAY EMERGE FROM TODAY'S CABINET SESSION, ALTHOUGH THE GENERAL BELIEF REMAINS THAT THE SUMMIT WILL PRECEDE THE PUBLICATION OF THE POLITICAL FORMULA.
LAMBRAKIS

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